



February 11, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chairwoman  
Senate Committee on Health, Education,  
Labor and Pensions  
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Health, Education,  
Labor and Pensions  
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee:

The National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD) writes to express our support for Attorney General Xavier Becerra's nomination as the next Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). I encourage the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pension to consider Attorney General Becerra's nomination as soon as possible so that he may then be considered by the Senate Finance Committee and quickly confirmed by the Senate.

NORD is a unique federation of over 325 voluntary health organizations and is dedicated to helping the 25-30 million Americans living with a rare disease. NORD is committed to the identification, treatment, and cure of rare disorders through programs of education, advocacy, research, and patient services. NORD supports sound policies that enable safe and effective medicines to reach the right rare disease patient at the right time to produce the best health outcomes possible.

As our government transitions between administrations, our country is still in the grips of a national crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is critical that America has its health leadership in place and working to protect the American public. The COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly challenging for the rare disease community, as many rare disease patients are immunocompromised, putting them at high risk of infection and severe illness. The rare disease community needs the strong leadership that Attorney General Becerra will provide and limit any interruption in HHS operations during this pandemic.

Outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, rare disease patients rely on close collaboration between HHS and numerous agencies under its purview, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and National Institutes of Health (NIH). NORD looks forward to working with Attorney General Becerra and HHS on efforts to ensure that basic research into complex rare diseases is fully funded, encouraging robust patient-focused drug development, bolstering the newborn screening program, and ensuring that the upcoming user fee reauthorizations benefit those with rare diseases.

NORD also urges Attorney General Becerra to confront the inequity in how our society administers health care, which has long existed, but the ongoing pandemic has made starkly evident. Attorney General Becerra, having spent over two decades in Congress and with his experience as the head of a

major state agency, is primed to effectively guide these agencies to ensure rare disease patients ultimately have access to safe and effective treatments for their conditions. As the leader of HHS, he will bear the enormous responsibility of coordinating our complex health system with its many stakeholders, but we are confident in his ability to do so on behalf of the American people.

NORD believes that Attorney General Becerra's lifetime of public service and commitment to patients makes him the right candidate for this role. We look forward to working alongside Attorney General Becerra in support of policies that translate into treatments and cures for rare disease patients. For questions regarding NORD or our support, please contact Rachel Sher, Vice President of Policy and Regulatory Affairs, at [rsheer@rarediseases.org](mailto:rsheer@rarediseases.org), or 202-588-5700.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter L. Saltonstall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Peter L. Saltonstall  
President and Chief Executive Officer